Caring for a person who is hard of hearing can be a daunting experience because communicating becomes such a challenge.

Just because someone wears a hearing aid does not mean that he or she hears normally. Often, the person can hear but cannot understand what’s being said.

Here are some helpful hints to ease frustration for both the caregiver and the person with hearing loss:

**When you are speaking:**

- Be sure you have the listener’s attention
- Face the person, do not speak with your back turned or from another room
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Do not chewing gum or food while you are speaking
- Keep objects, such as fingers and pencils, away from your mouth and face
- If you have a mustache, keep it trimmed above your upper lip
- Be patient and smile
- Be aware that saying “never mind,” “forget it,” or “I’ll tell you later” is hurtful
- Keep a pad and pen nearby for writing messages back and forth
- Offer clues to accompany your words, such as gesturing, pointing or miming
- Use picture cards to point to what you mean when other strategies fail

**Assess the hard of hearing listener:**

- How is the person feeling today? Well? In pain? Fatigued? Anxious?
- Has he or she started on different medication that could affect hearing, energy level, or ability to focus?
- Does the person have vision problems that could affect the ability to lipread?
- Can the person insert hearing aid batteries without help?
- Are the batteries in the hearing aid and are they charged?
How is the listening environment?

- Be sure there is no background noise, such as TV, radio, or noise from another room
- Ensure that the overall lighting is good
- Be sure the light source is not behind the person speaking
- Keep the room at a comfortable temperature
- Remove objects such as flower arrangements, candles, or centerpieces blocking the person’s view of the speaker
- Stay within a 3-to-6 foot proximity of the speaker
- Use a PA system or listening system when needed

Think about what you’re saying:

- Does the listener understand the topic, know what’s being discussed?
- Is the vocabulary familiar?
- Is the listener apprised when the subject is changed?
- Can you use key words or rephrase the message?

In general:

- Keep extra hearing aid batteries in a re-closeable, plastic bag along with instructions on how to replace the batteries and a copy of the business card of the person’s audiologist
- Keep a set of instructions in another re-closeable, plastic bag on how to assist the person with putting in their hearing aids, cochlear implant or other devices
- Be sure that other caregivers, family members or supervisors know where the person keeps his or her hearing aids when they are not being worn